



DHOFAR LETTER

News from Oman

No. 30 **April** **1978**

3. THE IMPERIALIST STRATEGY IN THE GULF

USA gives priority to the Gulf area

The US policy in the Gulf follows the principles of the Nixon Doctrine: to build strong local powers to ensure the stability in the region. Together Iran and Saudi Arabia will look after the interests of imperialism. Iran has the military power and Saudi Arabia has the economic means to handle this task. Both countries are dependant on the USA, who supplies them with arms and who has build up their military forces, which are to a great extent run by American personnel.

According to International Herald Tribune, February 28. and 29. 1978, Carter has had troubles with the Israelis because he has promised to sell sixty F-15 fighter-bombers, supposed to be the most effective in the world, to Saudi Arabia. The argument for this supply says that Saudi Arabia is central to global stability and a moderate Arab world. It is pointed out that Saudi Arabia has given financial support to Sadat and the more moderate Arabs.

In the last resort, if the preventive policy should turn up to be a total mistake in the Gulf, the US Secretary of Defence, Harold Brown has suggested the formation of a Gulf "strike force" of 100,000 men. This force should be ready to intervene from bases in the western Europe in any crisis which the local forces could not handle. The suggestion is a result of a study ordered by Carter last year, designed to protect US oil interests (Arabia & the Gulf, February 13. 78).

The cornerstone in the US policy is still the dominance and the teamwork of Saudi Arabia and Iran. A Gulf security pact should have been the remedy to achieve this.

A Gulf security pact

A couple of years ago, when the Gulf Security Pact was introduced it pretended to look after the great common interest of the Gulf countries, the defence of the oil-fields. There was talk of a pact to be a defence of the Gulf region against intervention from outside.

Formally the pact is turned against both the Soviet Union and the US threat to occupy the oil-fields. The intention is to make the pact look like an internal affair between Iran and the Arab countries of the Gulf - a genuine regional pact, which shall ensure the independence and autonomy of the region. This impression however, will not stand for a further examination.

To guarantee the oil supplies is an interest shared by the ruling classes of the Gulf and the imperialistic centers, and the USA has great influence on the two countries dominating the pact, Saudi Arabia and Iran. These facts show the international background of the pact.

It is also a question if you today can speak of a real danger of a Soviet intervention - a threat which for instance Iran favours to bring forward. On the other hand there are in the strongly reactionary Gulf states democratic and popular oppositions. If such an opposition develops into a direct threat against the sitting regime, it is possible for the shah of Iran to intervene fully legitimately, to help the regime; referring to "Soviet infiltration". Then the pact defines the Gulf as one region and it is turned against the Soviets. Such a use of the pact shows its reactionary and antidemocratic character.

The pact will place Iran with its enormous military forces in a quite central position in the Gulf, fully in accordance with the principles of the Nixon Doctrine.

The intentions of the pact will maybe become more evident by following its further fate, and its practical development in the co-operation between the countries.

The latest negotiations about the security pact on top-level collapsed at the Foreign Affairs Ministers meeting in Muscat in Nov. 76. The collapse was caused by the suspiciousness of the Arab states towards Iran. They were afraid to give intervention-facilities to Iran in their own countries - maybe one day Iran would turn its power against them. Especially Saudi

Arabia, with whom Iran shares the power in the region, was unwilling to give greater influence to Iran on their own expense. It was neither possible to find a common formula for a solution of the territorial problems in the region.

The unsuccessful summit-meeting in Muscat did not cause a abandonment of the security pact. The question at the meeting was not to say yes or no to the pact, in fact for a long time there has existed secret bilateral agreements between many countries in the region, on interchange of material from their intelligence services. The subject at the meeting was rather an extension of already existing co-operation and a formal confirmation of this. The result was not a formal pact, but in the time after the meeting the co-operation between the countries evidently developed towards what is called "securing of the internal safety", by other words a consolidation of the power of the reactionaries.

Kuwait and Iran officially agree to exchange intelligence material on activities dangerous to the state. The Arab League Interior Ministers conference in Cairo in Sep. 77 discuss closer co-operation. After the murder on the UAE Minister of Foreign Affairs in Oct. 77 Iran demands to get admittance to all informations and possibilities to follow the further inquiry in details. UAE refuses and appears to enter into a closer co-operation with Saudi Arabia (A&G Jan.2.78). The Kuwaiti Defence and Interior Minister is expected to make a tour around to the Arab Gulf states to discuss a common Gulf security pact. With him he has several senior police officials. The subject of the discussions will probably be to coordinate the internal "security operations" between the Gulf states (A&G Jan.9.78).

The co-operation between Iran and Oman

The example of Oman shows in practice what is the intentions of the Shah with a security pact. Oman is the main-allied of the Shah in the Gulf and their co-operation is a model on an effective bilateral teamwork on the terms of the Shah.

In Dec.77 the Shah visited Qaboos and the joint communique issued after the visit, put great emphasis on mutual assurance of security in the Straits of Hormuz and co-operation to quell internal subversion (A&G Dec.19.77). An analysis of the actions of Qaboos to fulfil his obligations, according to the communique issued after the meeting, will show the character of the co-operation.

One of the great aspirations of the Shah is to control the sea-routes leading to the oil-fields, this is on the first hand the entrance to the Gulf through the Straits of Hormuz. As early as in 1971 Iran annexed three Omani islands in the strait and has today build a large military base in the mountains of Roos al-Jibal in that part of the Ras Massendum peninsula which belongs to Oman (Saut al-Thawra no.10, Jan.78). The Shah has however, not the full control with the neighbouring areas on the peninsula. One area that borders on the military base, belongs to Ras al-Khaima, one of the smaller states in the UAE. Oil was found here just before the Shah's visit to Oman (MEED Dec.16.77) and this could easily make the situation uncontrollable to the Shah.

Among the first acts of Qaboos, after the visit of the Shah, was to raise demands on that part of the Ras al-Khaima coast where oil was found. The argument for his demand was that this area is inhabited by the Shuhul-tribe, which also lives in the Omani part of Ras Massendum (MEED Jan.6.78), and that Sheikh Saqr of Ras al-Khaima had penetrated the area since 1974 (A&G Jan.30.78). According to Saut al-Thawra no 11, Feb.78 Qaboos has sent troops to the border to create tensions in the area. Negotiations have been opened but they make slow progress. The UAE president Sheikh Zayid of Abu Dhabi is willing to negotiate, but he has no success with his diplomatic trips to Muscat, because Sheikh Saqr refuses to negotiate (A&G Jan.30.78). In the meantime it has appeared, that the oil findings at the disputed coast are so small that they presumably are without any commercial interest. The oil companies have closed the last drilling and has resigned from the co-operation (MEED Mar.31.78). Maybe this can influence the further development in the case. Still the Gulf Oil Company searches for oil along the coast (MEED Mar.17.78).

Another part of the searoutes is the entrance to the Red Sea through the Strait of Bab el-Mandeb. Here the searoutes can be controlled from the Shah's bases in Dhofar and from here the Shah can also intervene in the conflict in the Horn of Africa if it escalates. In a radiospeech on Jan.30.78 the Ethiopian leader Mengistu accuses president Carter to have coordinated an international conspiracy against Ethiopia. Mengistu said that Iran in secret has supplied Somalia with arms, and that Iranian troops will be sent to Somalia via Oman (Summary of World Broadcasts, Feb.1.78). A problem to the Shah is the Dhofar-region. The Peoples Liberation Army operates in the eastern and central Dhofar. The population is suspicious and against Qaboos. The tribal tirkats feel their privileges threatened and this creates tensions between them and the foreign troops.

New methods are used to try to solve the problems in Dhofar. In a new conspiracy against the revolution Qaboos was, according to Saut al-Thawra no 10, Feb. 78, held in the background for tactical reasons, because of his obvious alliance with the Shah, who had just visited Oman. Instead of Qaboos, his mother Maizon, who herself is from Dhofar and belongs to the tribe of Beit al-Maashani, entered the stage. She calls together the leaders of her tribe and suggests them to form a tribal council, which shall consist of only sheikhs. It is the intention that the other tribes in Dhofar shall form similar councils, and later on there shall be formed a superior sheikh council with delegates from all tribal councils.

In a proclamation from the People's Liberation Army in the eastern of Dhofar the purpose of these tribal councils is described as follows:

- 1) to hide the present national conflict by giving the people the impression, that they participate in the development of the country, and that they can get their demands fulfilled through this council.
- 2) to buy themselves free from the sufferings of our people and the blood of our martyrs by bribing those who are discontented, through the sheikhs in this council.
- 3) to chase and liquidate the revolutionaries by organizing the sheikhs and the members of each tribe, and use those means necessary for oppression in their area.
- 4) to destroy the national and patriotic spirit of the tribes by humiliating them towards the colonialists and the local puppets which are connected with the treacherous Muscat regime.
- 5) to create antagonism between the tribes and also between the revolutionaries and the people.
- 6) to dissolve the firqat divisions gradually and recruit the young men for the army to get trained and brainwashed by the British. Then they will be put under the authority of the tribal councils and will get their tasks through these. This is to control the firqats better and turn them against the revolutionaries.

Although some of the sheikhs had been given expensive gifts and money, many of them refuse to sign the plan. The People's Liberation Army warn anyone to participate in these councils and call upon the people to reject such plans aiming to break the unity of the people (Saut al-Thawra no 10, Jan. 78).

The strategy of imperialism

What both of these events are about is in reality: the protec-

tion of the imperialistic exploitation and control. The used strategy is neither invented by Qaboos nor by the Shah, but is the sum of imperialistic experience collected through hundreds of years of oppression of the peoples in the "third world". The planning is a result of an effective co-operation between the reactionaries of Oman, Iran, USA and Britain. Both examples however, look very locally:

- the border conflict between Oman and Ras al-Khaima ressemble a local territorial problem.
- if the plan of tribal councils succeed, the Dhofarianes will fight each other and it will look like a traditional tribal problem.

The bilateral co-operation in the Gulf is not only a question of security to the local reactionaries, but a question of security for the world imperialism.

4. FOREIGN WORKERS IN OMAN

In the Times, February 15. 1978, you could read as follows:

" Two senior officials of India's Ministry of Labor have gone to the Gulf state of Oman to investigate allegations of maltreatment and police harassment of immigrant Indian workers.

The Indian government has for some time been tightening up on the contracts and guarantees its immigrants sign here with labor contracting firms before going to work overseas. But this is the first on-the-spot check.

The two officials are expected to go on to the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, about which there have also been complaints.

The inspection was prompted by an incident last month in a labour camp in Oman where about 4.000 Indian construction workers live. Workers arriving back in Bombay last week told of being put on an Air India flight after being harassed by police and deported, with their wages paid.

The men blamed a Cypriot labour contracting firm that recruits in India, alleging that it had denounced them for attempting to organize trade unions to improve work conditions.

One of the alleged union ringleaders said in Bombay last week that he had obtained a three sided agreement between Oman's Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, the Cypriot labour contractors who recruit in India and the Indian construction workers, whereby the workers would resume overtime work under the conditions laid down by local labour laws. But afterwards, he

said, the labourers found they were required to work 16 hours a day. "

The background for the labor import into the oil states

This event must be seen in relation to the labor import, which has taken place in the Middle East since the beginning of the oil exploitation, and which has seriously increased within the last 5 years, because of the multiplied oil prices.

Labour migration, whether permanent or temporary is a frequent feature of capitalist development, but the flow of labour into the oil states of the Gulf is relatively greater than any other comparable flow in recent times (i.e. although the number of immigrants, 3 - 3,5 mill., is much smaller than those 10 - 15 mill. peoples immigrating into western Europe in the post-war period, the number of immigrants compared with the native population is greater).

This phenomenon in the Gulf countries which have been flooded by the income from their oil, is partly, as for most of them, due to the fact that their population is very small (this is the situation in Oman, Saudi Arabia and even more in Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and the UAE) and partly due to the frequent lack of skilled labour in the countries of the "third world". Therefore these countries imported both skilled and unskilled workers in great numbers. Today in Saudi Arabia and Oman the immigrated workers form the majority of the wage earners. The situation is even more extreme in Kuwait, Qatar and the UAE where the immigrants make up at least 3/4 of the workers and the majority of the whole population.

The small population and the lack of skilled personnel explains, that there must be some import of labour, but not why it should take such an extent. The fact that the local population for various reasons is not fully utilized must be blamed for this: Some governments have preferred immigrated labour instead of a local working class, because the immigrated workers are easier to control (they can be deported at will if they cause troubles). Often their wages are smaller than the wages of local workers, because regulations for minimum wages do not apply to immigrants. Further the immigrants are in a worse position when it comes to actions to improve wages. The women and the nomads are sources not utilized in these countries and this is another restriction in the use of local labor. Finally some of these states, due to the oil revenues, are able to pay salary to male citizens even when these in fact don't work.

Local citizens in this way evading work, is another factor increasing need for foreign labour.

This is the socio-economic background for the mass import of labour from the poor and dense populated countries in the region. The fates hiding behind these facts and figures - how life is for an unskilled worker in an oil state the following will throw some light on.

The conditions of the immigrant worker

In India and Pakistan it has become a widespread profession to recruit workers for the oil states for instance through advertisements in papers. To make the workers leave their home-country, they are promised that in the oil states they can get well-paid work and have part in the social services. This is ofcause very attractive to peoples living a poor life and many decide leave. Among these also married men, leaving wife and children, because they believe that later on they can send for the family and give them a new and better life. But as it will soon appear realities are quite different - but then it is too late.

Some pay an agent for the transportation to the oil state and then they think that everything is fixed. The transport across the Gulf turns up to be a rather barbarian tour, which makes the thoughts wander back to the slave ships of earlier times: overfilled sailing ships with too small supplies of water and food for the travel, sometimes lasting for weeks. At the arrival new problems appear, because now the foreigner learns that he can't get a work without a visa. To get a visa he must pay a native a lot of money, and naturally this poor immigrant has not got the money to pay neither a visa nor the travel home. He must pay the visa from his wage, and he has to deposit his passport with the native. He is now fully in the hands of this native.

Other workers sign a contract at home which includes free visa, but there is no guarantee that they will not be treated likewise.

When the immigrant has almost paid for the visa, he may be told that this visa was only for one year, and that he now has to pay a new one with part of his wage as he did with the first one. If he is lucky, he is able to borrow some money to buy himself free, to get the passport back and thereby escape the native and maybe get a little better working conditions in another firm, so that he can pay his debts and then later

on save some money. If he is unlucky the native will get him deported as soon as the visa is paid - then the native can practise the same trick to new immigrant workers.

Concerning contractual agreements on wages, board and lodging and social services such as medical treatment, they will, just as the agreements on the visa, often show up to be worth no more than the paper they are written on. The worker must accept a lower wage and pay for board and lodging.

The situation is even worse for those who were smuggled into the oil countries without a passport. Some have paid an agent to smuggle them into the country only to get deported upon arrival. Others succeed to find work but they are often the victims of blackmail and must pay part of their wage to avoid being reported to the authorities and risk imprisonment followed by deportation (if they can't raise money to bribe the police).

Generally there is an enormous housing shortage throughout the oil states and the immigrants are living together under miserable circumstances - and must pay disproportional high rents.

Because of the actual situation regarding housing and wages it is impossible to send for the family to come.

The immigrant workers must overcome great obstacles if they want to organize and change the conditions. They have no rights at all. They can be deported as a matter of course only to give place to new immigrant workers. Many are very bound to their homeland and has strong economic obligations towards their families at home. The money they send is vital for their families. Further the immigrant workers have very different backgrounds, they don't even speak the same language.

In spite of the large obstacles which the foreign workers have to overcome they have in fact succeeded to carry out some strikes and demonstrations for better working and living conditions in several oil states, besides Oman among them Kuwait and the UAE, especially in Dubay, where more than half of the foreign workers are illegal (more than 100.000 according to MEED, Report on the UAE, July 1977). The result of these actions is normally deportation - this was also the reaction in Oman in the case referred above. What is unusual in this case is that representatives from the Indian Ministry of Labour have made investigations on the spot and will do the same in Saudi Arabia and in the UAE - normally the governments in the poor labour exporting countries are not interested in criticizing the powerfull oil states. If the Indian government as it is reported,

will check the recruitment agencies and the labour contracts, and make sure that all workers immigrating into the oil states have signed a contract before going, that would be a direct improvement of the workers situation, although these measures naturally are not taken to obtain a fundamental change in this disgusting trade in human beings or to remove what is the cause of it.

The fundamental information on the immigration of labour into the oil states is taken from a very recommendable article by Fred Halliday: Labor migration in the Middle East. Published in the American magazine MERIP Reports No 59, 1977, page 8-17.

5. MILITARY COMMUNIQUE FROM PFLO

The communique says: "On 20th January, 1978, a convoy of enemy vehicles moved towards the main line situated in the north of the western area of the southern region of Oman. At 9.30 in the morning an anti-tank land mine exploded under a vehicle of the Bedford type which was carrying troops.

In the second day - 21.1.78 - at eight in the morning the same convoy returned from the said line and another anti-tank mine exploded under a Bedford vehicle carrying troops. The enemy losses during both explosions were as follows:

- 1) Twelve enemy personnel were hit between dead and injured
- 2) Destruction completely of two vehicles

The mines were planted by an engineering group of the forces of the People's Liberation Army which returned to their base safely after the operations." (Saut al-Thawra no.11, 1978, p.14).

6. QABOOS SUPPLIES EQUIPMENT FOR ISRAELI OIL DRILLING

Israel has struck oil in the Gulf of Suez, using rig owned by the Sultanate of Oman.

The drilling was carried out by the Panama-registered American company, Moncrief International, a cover for a group also involving American oil companies. The reason for this cover is the Arab boycott regulations, that could cause them to be expelled from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, if their connection with Israel were discovered.

Moncrief contracted to obtain the equipment and finance the necessary outlay. It is said that Qaboos was paid a bribe of \$ 1 mill. to turn the blind eye when the rig was taken out of Oman. It is not clear who paid: the company or Israel (Economist, Dec.3.77).

7. SCANDINAVIAN SOLIDARITY ACTIVITIES FOR THE OMANI PEOPLE

Support during the period December 77 to April 78

A working camp arranged by the Danish Emmaus in December raised a surplus of app. 3000 US \$, which will be used to support the Omani Red Crescent (ORC). The Danish group the Fleamarked Group International Solidarity has financed a shipment of a complete set of equipment for a specialist Ear Nose Throat doctor (ENT), and some chemicals and eye-ointments. Emmaus Björkå (Sweden) has shipped 10 tons of sorted second-hand clothes for the PFLO. Emmaus Fnysinge (Sweden) has sent a number of vital spare parts for the generator in the Fatma Ghananah hospital. Emmaus Fnysinge, Support the Peoples of the World (Denmark) and the Fleamarked Group International Solidarity are jointly preparing to ship 2 Landrovers which have been fitted as ambulances, each with two beds, oxygen sets etc.

8. NEW SOLIDARITY PROJECTS

Short time ago, there was a series of discussions between PFLO and its various organizations and KROAG. As a result of these discussions a number of new solidarity projects were formulated, which gives guidelines for the future material support work aiming to support the very important mobilizing and organizing work in the border area of the PDRY.

The Omani Womens Organization (OWO) is going to make a Womens Cultural Center consisting of: illitracity classes, a workshop for sewing, a maternity and children welfare clinic, a kindergarden and various education. The buildings are under construction now and will according to the plans be finished in the summer. In connection with the center and in connection with other mass work done by OWO, they need various equipment, such as: 1 Landrover, 1 cross-country bus, children clothes, food and vitamines, toys, 2 kerosene refrigerators, 10 Arabic typewriters and various smaller equipment.

According to the PFLO, support to OWO must be given high priority in the future.

The Schools of Revolution needs a 25kVA-generator and a cross-country lorry and further they want to establish 3 workshops: metal, wood and electrician, as well as they need some smaller equipment.

Background information about the situation in the border area of PDRY can be found in Dhofar Letter. News from Oman, Special

Issue 7, February 1978, and a more detailed description of the projects can be ordered from KROAG.

9. SUPPORT PFLO THROUGH PRACTICAL WORK IN EMMAUS FNYSINGE

Emmaus Fnysinge needs more working comrades. Emmaus Fnysinge is a small so called "rag picker" collective in Sweden, situated in the country side app. 100 km from Stockholm. You work and live collectively on a former farm. The wage is app. 300 Swedish kroner monthly plus board and lodging. You work 5 days a week from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.. The work is: to collect old things from private homes: furnitures, smaller things and clothes, to sort the clothes, to arrange fleamarkets where the other things are sold and ofcause to do information work concerning the support.

Fnysinge supports the PFLO with the money earned from the fleamarkets and ZANU with the clothes. This support expresses a clear political attitude which is also expressed in the rules of the community saying that it is the wish to send as much economic and material support as possible, to the national liberation movements in their struggle against imperialism, because this struggle forms the most important contribution to the liberation of mankind.

If you want to participate in this work and you are minded to stay for a longer period, then write for further information to: Emmaus Fnysinge, S-19070 Fjärdhundra, Sweden.

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